

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 8 August, 2023 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baldrey
Ms S Fanet
Mr J C Grafton
Mr A MacDonald

Mr T MacLennan
Ms L Siggers
Ms K Willis

Officials in Attendance:

Ms T Urry, Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment
Mr G Kennedy, Senior Engineer, Infrastructure & Environment
Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance Service

Also in attendance:-

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander (Highland West), Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
Mr J Taylor, Youth Development Officer, High Life Highland
Ms M Barker, Youth Development Officer, (Fort William), High Life Highland
Ms R Carmichael, Youth Development Officer (Fort William), High Life Highland
Ms K Gillespie, Youth Development Officer (Kinlochleven), High Life Highland
Ms C Munro, Highland Youth Convener

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council.
All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to Committee.**

Ms K Willis in the Chair

BUSINESS

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were none.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Lochaber Committee.

**4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report
Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus
Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No LA/11/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, reference was made to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) new policy, whereby as of 1st July 2023, the Service will no longer respond to all unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) activations and duty holders will be responsible for managing these activations. The Service would continue to respond to life risk and set criteria ensuring that public safety is maintained.

As a result of this new policy there had been a reduction in the number of calls that Stations, mainly in urban areas, required to attend. However, in response to a concern about the viability of stations in remote rural areas, there was little impact in the number of callouts as a result of this policy for stations covering remote rural areas and no Stations were being looked at for closure at this time. It was being considered as to whether the remote rural station model could be used to support the Scottish Ambulance Service with medical responses such as cardiac arrest, slips, trips and falls events. This would require negotiation with the trade unions, senior management team and Scottish Government. The only impact on Stations was where savings required to be made in the service delivery model programme and the on call may be reviewed in the future.

Continuing, a number of Local Authorities, including the Highland Council, were opposed to the UFAS policy. Under the Fire Scotland Act 2005, it was the responsibility of the duty holder that they were responsible for managing fire safety within the premises. This policy and its implications had been considered for a number of years before being implemented. If it was found that there was an enhanced risk in certain areas, this could be reviewed, with a view to moving back to a response model requiring attendance to a UFAS.

In response to a query regarding the Spean Bridge Station appliance, it was acknowledged that while the appliance was fit for purpose, it was old and did need changed. Community Response Stations, such as Spean Bridge, in Highland had all been reviewed in relation to the appliance type they require. A range of appliance models were to be procured to ensure stations had the appliances that were fit for purpose.

In relation to initiatives to reduce road traffic collisions, particularly where foreign tourists were concerned, rental companies had been encouraged to put stickers in their vehicles alerting drivers to drive on the left and these messages were highlighted in a number of foreign languages. Similar messages were being targeted at campervan rentals. This was both a local and national problem and efforts were being made to try and address it. Better land maintenance around laybys along the A82 in order to encourage drivers to stop and let queues clear would also be considered.

In relation to preventing wildfires an undertaking was given to engage with the Highland Council Ranger Service on this issue.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance report.

5. High Life Highland Youth Work in Lochaber

There was circulated Report No. LA/12/23 by the Area Youth Officer, High Life Highland. Officers of the Youth Development Service were in attendance and provided an update about some of the projects that have been delivered by High Life Highland's Youth Service in Lochaber since April 2021 in each of the four Associated School Groups areas. The Highland Youth Convenor also provided an update of her year in post.

There then followed a question and answer session and some of the points raised were as follows:-

- anti social behaviour by young people in Fort William town centre. This had been an ongoing issue for some months and very little could be done to address it. The Police were called to incidents but sometimes they were too busy or did not have enough Officers to attend. There was ongoing work with the group of young people involved, however, Youth Development Officers had limited time to be in the Town centre to carry out this engagement;
- the Youth Services hard work in difficult conditions was acknowledged;
- the Youth Service had been contacted about being involved in the Scottish Rural & Islands Youth Parliament 2023 to be held in Fort William in November, 2023;
- it was acknowledged that more funding for youth services was needed and in particular, significant investment was required in resources for public sector Partners, such as the Police and Social Services, to work with families of young people
- in order to prevent suicides of young people, a crises place of safety in Fort William for them was required, where all Services could undertake intensive work with young people who were a suicide risk;
- there had been significant reductions to NHS expectant mothers care. If parents are supported at an early stage by agencies they then know where to go for help. There was not enough support in the town for parents who were having difficulties in dealing with their children. It took a community with tolerance to raise a child; and
- discussion on the issues raised at the meeting would continue at a future Area Business meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the report and presentations made by Area Youth Officer, Highland Youth Convenor and Youth Development Officers and **AGREED** to:-

- i. advocate for and work alongside young people, support them through community-based activities and to participate democratically in matters affecting them;
- ii. provide ongoing support of the Transport Initiative in Ardnamurchan; and
- iii. provide ongoing support to meet the demands of Youth Work in Fort William.

6. Lochaber Area Roads Winter Service Plan 2023/24 Plana Seirbheis Rathaidean Geamhraidh Sgìre Loch Abar 2023/24

There was circulated Report No. LA/13/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment which detailed the 2023/24 Winter Service Plan for Lochaber Area.

In discussion, it was advised that that the route between Kilchoan and the lighthouse was down as a route to be gritted in the Plan, but this would be checked and confirmed with Councillor A Macdonald given a concern locally that this road was not being treated.

It was advised that in extreme weather primary routes would be the priority for treatment and thereafter other routes would be treated when there was time and resources to do so. If there was a secondary route that was deemed essential to keep clear then resources would be diverted to this route. To help deal with exceptional prolonged snowfall situations, local contractors are available who can supply equipment and operators to assist in clearing deep snow at short notice. Community self help was also encouraged aimed at supporting winter maintenance locally.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for the Lochaber Area.

7. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund grant awards 2023/24.

Ward 11

HLH Archive Centre – contribution to travelling exhibition costs Tir nan Og - £750

Lochaber Wheeled sports society – for purchase of biked & helmets - £1000

Ward 21

Kinlochleven Primary School Council – School trip - £250

South Lochaber Community Association – Contribution to Bus repairs - £1750

Lochaber wheeled sports society – for purchase of bikes & helmets - £1000

8. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 16 May, 2023 which were approved by the Council on 29 June, 2023, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 12.15 p.m.